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Operational activities segment
General segment

Provisional summary record of the 34th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 18 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Jean-Marc Hoscheit ..... (Luxembourg)

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In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation:

(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*) (A/63/71-E/2008/46, A/63/85-E/2008/83, E/2008/49, E/2008/60, E/2008/CRP.4)

Draft resolution entitled "Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system" (E/2008/L.12)

1. **Mr. Gass** (Switzerland), introducing draft resolution E/2008/L.12, entitled "Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system", drew attention to some minor editorial changes, introduced to align the language of the draft resolution with that of the triennial comprehensive policy review.

2. **The President** invited the Council to adopt draft resolution E/2008/L.12, noting that it contained no programme budget implications.

3. *Draft resolution E/2008/L.12, as orally revised, was adopted.*

4. **Mr. Heidt** (United States of America) said that while the resolution did contain important guidance for the implementation of the triennial comprehensive policy review, it lacked an element on one aspect of the review: assessing the results of United Nations development system activities and contributions to developing countries' capacity-building efforts. Furthermore, his delegation had reservations on paragraphs 7 and 13 of the resolution, which overstepped the normal practice that the governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies provided operational guidance to those organizations' chief executives while the Economic and Social Council provided general policy orientation for the organizations' guidance.

5. **Ms. Greenaway** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the role and function of the Council, which was a principal organ of the United Nations system, should not be subverted. Any attempt to diminish its role as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to the Member States and the United Nations system, including all relevant entities, should be resisted.

6. **Mr. Mori** (Japan) welcomed the adoption of the resolution and expressed the hope that the Council would encourage the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies to take practical and sound steps for implementing their respective tasks, with clear benchmarks and achievable targets in accordance with General Assembly resolution 62/208. Japan remained committed to supporting the United Nations system to make a significant impact on the ground in programme countries.

Documents submitted under agenda item 3

7. **The President** drew the Council's attention to the following documents submitted under item 3:

- Actions taken by the executive boards and governing bodies of the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies in the area of simplifications and harmonization of the United Nations development system (E/2008/CRP.4);
- Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund on its work during 2007 (E/2007/35);
- Report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (E/2008/5);
- Annual report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on its first regular session of 2008 (E/2008/6 and Corr.1);
- Annual report of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme for 2007: Note by the Secretary-General (E/2008/14);
- Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its 2008 first regular session (E/2008/34 (Part I));

- Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its 2008 first regular session: Joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP (E/2008/34 (Part I)/Add.1);
- Report of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme on the first and second regular sessions and annual session of 2007 (E/2008/36, Supp. No. 16);
- Extract from the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on its 2008 annual session (E/2008/L.8).

8. *The Council took note of the documents submitted under item 3.*

9. **Ms. Houngbedji** (Benin) expressed concern at the growing number of conference room papers that were being issued, noting that there was no on-line access to such papers.

10. **The President** said that the Secretariat would take note of that issue.

General segment

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

(a) Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development (E/2008/67)

Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265, including 61/16

11. **The President** recalled that the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (E/2008/77) had been introduced during the coordination segment of the Council, on 8 July 2008.

12. **Ms. Greenaway** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, welcomed the opportunity that the current year's general segment of the Council afforded to reflect on achievements and challenges in financing for development since the adoption of the Monterrey Consensus. In that regard, the Group considered the upcoming Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha, to be the most significant international meeting on financing for development since the adoption of the Consensus.

13. During the current session of the Council, including the high-level segment, the Group of 77 and China had found it extremely difficult to secure agreement on full and proper treatment of thematic issues that were critical to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Such issues included food security and the global food crisis; trade policies including agricultural subsidies; debt; declining official development assistance; science and technology for eradication of poverty and hunger; sustainable development; and financing for adaptation and technology transfer to combat the effects of climate change. In each case the Group had been told that it should wait until the Doha conference. Consequently, the Group expected that those issues would be given the full proper and appropriate treatment in the follow-up agreement on financing for development.

14. The Council had a significant leadership role to play in tackling persistent and emerging global economic and social challenges, and in ensuring the full and effective implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations summits and conferences. The international community had fallen behind schedule in its efforts to achieve most of the MDGs and the rate of progress in many areas would undoubtedly slow down in the face of the current multiple crises, which were having a very severe impact on the poorest segments within countries. That made the Council's role even more pertinent. The Council must therefore methodically review the present state of implementation of various agreements and commitments, assess the constraints on implementation and the likely setbacks that current and emerging challenges would cause, and give direction to encourage and facilitate the coordinated effort that would be required.

15. The current session had also made explicit the impact which the continuing lack of coherence in global macroeconomic, financial and trade policies, and the politics and actions of international financial institutions and some developed countries, had on the achievement of global and national goals. The Group therefore emphasized the need for coordination and coherence in international financial policymaking and called for greater progress in that regard.

16. The Group of 77 and China again called on developed countries to meet their long-standing commitments, including in particular those made at the Monterrey Conference, and urged them to utilize the upcoming Doha Conference as an occasion to honour those commitments, including meeting the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross national income to ODA.

17. The Group of 77 and China fully expected the Doha conference to undertake a substantive review of all elements of the Monterrey Consensus — not to pick and choose issues that were of interest to select developed countries while neglecting the position of developing countries — and the linkages among them, and to analyse not only new and emerging challenges to financing for development but also the way forward. It was important to consider establishing an efficient follow-up mechanism on financing for development, both for the commitments assumed in Monterrey and for those that would surely be made in Doha.

18. **Mr. Metelitsa** (Belarus) recalled that the special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), held on 14 April 2008, had proposed such new initiatives on financing for development as a currency transaction tax, a global lottery and a tax on airline tickets. While noting that the search for new sources of financing for development programmes should continue, he also stressed that such sources must be considered only as supplementary to the commitments already undertaken by developed countries in the context of the Monterrey Consensus.

19. Despite the promising market for trading greenhouse gas emission quotas, Belarus could still not participate in that system until the amendment to the Kyoto Protocol had been ratified. His delegation therefore called upon all parties to the Kyoto Protocol to complete the internal procedures necessary for the amendment to come into force without further delay.

20. The continuing global financial crisis, accompanied by an increase in the price of energy resources and foodstuffs, had demonstrated the need for the strict regulation of financial markets. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) should increase its efforts in that area.

21. The international development assistance system, primarily through the United Nations, should provide a harmonized approach to the classification of middle-income countries such as Belarus. The current lack of a unified approach was an obstacle to efforts aimed at institutionalization, which also hampered the role that middle-income countries could play both within the United Nations and within the international trading system.

22. The executive boards of United Nations operational agencies needed to ensure a more coordinated, harmonized and, where possible, unified approach to the provision of assistance to middle-income countries. For example, UNICEF could benefit from the experience of UNFPA and introduce additional criteria for implementation of its activities in countries where, despite relatively high levels of income, there were still problems in the areas of child education, health care and protection from violence.

23. It was also extremely important to assist middle-income countries with their economic reforms, particularly the reform of their energy supply systems. In that connection, the United Nations, the World Bank and other international partners should increase their assistance to middle-income countries through the transfer and introduction of advanced energy efficient technologies and new and renewable energy sources. In view of the significant financial resources required to reform the energy sector of middle-income countries, the World Bank could also consider extending lines of credit to that group of countries for the implementation of energy projects.

24. **The President** drew attention to the "Summary by the President of the Council of the special high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development" (E/2008/67).

25. **Mr. Lebrun-Damiens** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, welcomed the discussions held in the context of the high-level meeting and dealing with the theme of "Coherence, coordination and cooperation in the implementation of the Monterrey consensus". As the leading donor of development assistance worldwide, the European Union remained entirely dedicated to the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, the integrity of which must be preserved. The European

Union intended to play a key role during the Doha Conference and was contributing actively to the preparatory process.

26. It was important to emphasize the involvement of civil society and the private sector in the implementation of and follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus. The Monterrey process must remain inclusive and transparent. The important meetings to be held before Doha would be part of the preparation of that event. That was particularly the case for the high-level meeting on the theme "Africa's development needs", to be held in September 2008. The European Union also looked forward to the High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to be held in Accra from 2 to 4 September 2008. Improving the effectiveness of aid was essential to ensuring that development financing had the greatest impact possible.

27. **Ms. Artauli** (Indonesia) said that rising food and energy prices, financial instability and the continuing threat of climate change perhaps presaged the worst global crisis of recent times. Many countries were already reeling from the socio-economic and political impact of the food crisis and the slowing global economy. Given that unfavourable situation, it would be difficult for the majority of developing countries to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and commitments, including the MDGs. Addressing the situation required not only that national governments should refocus their development policies and strategies, but also that the international community should strengthen global partnership, with the aim creating an international environment conducive to development. Consequently, the forthcoming Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to review the implementation of the Monterey Consensus was timely. Indeed, that Conference should thoroughly consider the six themes of Monterrey and come up with ways of meeting recent and new challenges.

28. Particular attention should be paid to the development financing concerns of middle-income countries and to financing for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. While it was doing its utmost to meet its development goals and commitments, Indonesia as a middle-income country continued to face challenges such as financial vulnerability, declining foreign direct investment and various trade barriers to its export products. Greater international support for the development of middle-income countries was needed, especially in the area of financing for development.

29. Climate change would make basic development in developing countries more costly and also make it more difficult for those countries to sustain the MDGs beyond 2015. The Human Development Report 2008/09 suggested that the long-term ODA requirements might be closer to 1 per cent of gross national income once climate change was taken into consideration. In that regard, dedicated sources of additional finance for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change would be needed, providing reassurance to developing countries that the resources would be both predictable and additional to other aid commitments.

30. **Mr. Heidt** (United States of America) applauded the efforts by the President of the Council to convene a meaningful spring meeting involving the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and UNCTAD. While the current year's meeting had been a step in the right direction, coming close to the goal established for it in the Monterrey Consensus, one key area for improvement would be to allow for greater involvement by the representatives of Member States in the work of the Bretton Woods institutions. Giving such officials an enhanced role would improve the substance of the meetings and lead to greater participation by those bodies.

Coordination, programme and other questions

(c) International cooperation in the field of informatics (E/2008/65)

Economic and environmental questions (E/2008/77)

(b) Science and technology for development (E/2008/31 and E/2008/48)

31. **Ms. Weesner** (Office of the Chief Information Technology Officer), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation in the field of informatics (E/2008/65), said that the report highlighted the results of the close continuing cooperation between the Secretariat and the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group on Informatics. The Working Group focused on improving working conditions for delegates using the information technology resources of the Secretariat, and had already introduced such practical innovations as wireless Internet connectivity and access to power

outlets in meeting rooms, and had also overseen the creation of a CandiWeb site to support the elections process. In coordination with the Secretariat, it was developing an improved web portal to replace the current un.int website for the use of permanent missions; it was also preparing, in coordination with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), a new web content management system to be used by permanent mission staff. In those and other ways outlined in the report, the Working Group had been effective in providing a bridge between the needs of the diplomatic community and the information technology solutions provided by the Secretariat.

32. **The President**, drawing attention to the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels (E/2008/48), recalled that the General Assembly in its resolution 62/182 had reaffirmed its request to the Council to oversee the system-wide follow-up to the Geneva and Tunis outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society and had requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixty-third session, through the Council, a report for the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, as mandated by the Council in its resolution 2006/46, on the status of the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the Summit.

33. **Mr. Sarhan** (Iraq) said that the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector was extremely important, having the potential to contribute to achievement of the MDGs by improving economic development and increasing technological innovation and research and development. International efforts should therefore be directed towards the optimal use of ICT and making it universally available. Governments, particularly those of the developing countries, that wished to achieve MDGs must exert every effort to use ICT and provide relevant statistics that could be used in the decision-making process. Access costs must be reduced and workforce capacities improved.

34. Iraq had been one of the first Arab countries to adopt ICT and in the early 1970s had established specialized centres which employed ICT in producing statistics and administering censuses. However, the sanctions regime and wars that had affected the country in recent decades had had a negative impact on that sector. Because of its belief in the benefits of ICT, Iraq was devoting serious efforts to the development of the sector. It had established the Ministry of Science and Technology and introduced a mobile telephone network. It also planned to establish a national centre for geographic information systems, link a number of ministries to the Internet in order to form a nucleus for future e-government, and expand service provision throughout the country.

35. Notwithstanding the many problems Iraq faced in achieving requisite ICT development, one of the most serious of which was the destruction of the communications infrastructure, it intended, with the support and cooperation of the international community, to achieve a number of goals. Infrastructure was essential, as was increased investment in ICT sector projects. Cooperation with regional and international organizations and funds must be strengthened and focus placed on establishing research and development centres, attracting scientists and innovators, eradicating technological illiteracy, developing curriculums to encourage rapid advances in the sector and using ICT applications for education and training.

36. **Mr. Falatar** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO had been very active in the area of science, technology and innovation policy, providing science policy advice to developing countries and small island developing States. In view of the need for scientific advice in informed policymaking, UNESCO advocated that all levels of government should establish and regularly review mechanisms for ensuring timely access to the best available advice from the scientific community. In keeping with the recommendation of the 1999 Budapest World Conference on Science, UNESCO capacity-building activities were aimed at assisting developing countries to promote consistent and long-term support for science and technology, so as to strengthen the human resource base in science, establish scientific institutions, improve and upgrade science education, integrate science into the national culture, develop infrastructure and promote technology and innovation capacities.

37. Science, technology and innovation capacity varied not only between developed and developing countries but also among developing countries themselves. In view of the need for science policy interventions to be evidence-based, UNESCO had

made considerable efforts to map science, technology and innovation capacity worldwide, and was also working with developing countries worldwide to reform their science, technology and innovation systems, and harness scientific knowledge by using scientific expertise more systematically in policymaking.

38. While it had been engaged in science, technology and innovation policy development in a number of countries throughout the world, the first priority of UNESCO in that regard was Africa and it had launched a science, technology and innovation policy initiative for Africa in cooperation with the African Union. Additionally, UNESCO was monitoring progress in science, technology and innovation through its Institute for Statistics, which was collecting and analyzing data on science, technology and innovation potential covering both input and output indicators. UNESCO was also helping to enhance the participation of women in science and technology, notably by establishing university chairs in those fields, and through the "For Women in Science" partnership with the L'Oreal cosmetics company. Finally, UNESCO planned to hold the next World Science Forum, entitled "Ten Years After" in Budapest in 2009, to take stock of progress made in implementing the agenda of the first World Science Conference, held in 1999.

39. **Mr. Metelitsa** (Belarus) commended the efforts of the United Nations to increase multilateral cooperation in order to develop a coordinated approach to the challenge of building an information society. The transition to a knowledge-based economy in Belarus was occurring at a swift pace thanks to the establishment of innovative technology infrastructure, including a high-tech park for software development. Furthermore, Belarus already had the highest telephone density rate among the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), with an average of 37 lines per 100 inhabitants.

40. The role of information and communication technologies as a catalyst for development was acknowledged by all nowadays, as was the enormous digital divide that still existed between developed and developing countries. Bridging that divide should allow all countries to enjoy equal access to the benefits of the modern knowledge-based economy. The role of the United Nations in that connection should therefore be to develop the requisite mechanisms and to establish the necessary conditions to meet that challenge. In view of its universality and moral authority, the United Nations should have the main responsibility for ensuring that information and communication technologies were used as a factor for development.

41. However, the vast majority of developing countries and many middle-income countries were still being denied access to technological advances as a result of their limited resources as well as unfavourable conditions for technology transfer. The international community should therefore help those countries to make effective use of new technologies in order to enhance their energy efficiency and productivity in various sectors of the economy, including the agricultural sector.

42. International scientific and technical cooperation to promote the growth and development of all States had clearly become a priority task for the United Nations in a globalizing world. Accordingly, the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development had increased. His delegation supported the outcome of the Commission's eleventh session held in May 2008, whose main decisions and recommendations provided clear guidelines on how to strengthen and make use of national scientific and technical potential for the purposes of development in the key areas of international cooperation, and called for the decisions of the Commission to be supported and for efforts aimed at improving its work to continue in order to enable the Commission to implement its mandate effectively.

43. **Mr. St. Aimée** (Saint Lucia) said that, despite the adoption of many resolutions on science and technology for development and on technology transfer over the years, appropriate mechanisms for enabling the less-fortunate to bridge the technology divide continued to remain elusive. There appeared to be a need to concentrate on one or two specific areas with a multiplier effect, for example, the use of science and technology in industrial development, so as to push the process forward. In the context of small States, the application of science and technology to small and medium-sized development projects, agriculture, climate change, renewable energy and water-resources development held the promise of practical results. He thanked UNESCO for the credible work it had carried out in the Caribbean region through the Caribbean Council for Science and Technology and expressed the hope that UNDP and other agencies could provide further assistance in that regard.

Recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on its eleventh session (E/2008/31)

44. **The President** drew attention to the recommendations contained in chapter I, section A and B of the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on its eleventh session (E/2008/31).

Draft resolution entitled "Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society"

45. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

Draft decision I: Participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society entities in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development at its twelfth and thirteenth sessions

46. *Draft decision I was adopted.*

Draft decision II: "Participation of academic entities in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development"

47. *Draft Decision II was adopted.*

Draft decision III: "Report of the Secretary-General on science, technology and innovation to be submitted to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development at its twelfth session"

48. *Draft Decision III was adopted.*

Draft decision IV: "Report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on its eleventh session and provisional agenda and documentation for the twelfth session of the Commission"

49. *Draft decision IV was adopted.*

Oral decision

50. **The President** proposed that the Council take note of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (E/2008/48).

51. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.